Hamilton Field,
Company Officers' Quarters Type C
South Oakwood Drive and Las Lomas Drive
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ

HABS CAL 21-NOVA,

### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey National Park Service Department of the Interior San Francisco, California

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS CAL 21-NOVA, 185-

# HAMILTON FIELD

Company Officers' Quarters, Type C (Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, 246, 256, 260, 266, 278)

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ

Location:

Hamilton Army Air Field

Novato, Marin County, California Company Officers' Quarters, Type C

Facility Nos. 226 (226 South Oakwood Drive), 232 (232 South Oakwood Drive), 236 (236 South Oakwood Drive), 240 (240 South Oakwood Drive), 246 (246 South Oakwood Drive), 256 (256 Las Lomas Drive), 260 (260 Las Lomas Drive), 266 (266 Las Lomas Drive), and

278 (278 Las Lomas Drive)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980) Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980) UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;

C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: Military families

Present Use: Residential

Statement of Significance:

The Type C Company Officers' Quarters (COQ) are among the original residential units designed by the Constructing Quartermaster's Office at Hamilton Army Air Field. The quarters were equipped with all the modern amenities available at the time they were built and were architecturally unique in the military system. The buildings are significant as examples of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's mission heritage in a dramatic departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 2

### PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

# A. Physical History:

- 1. Date of Erection: COQ Type C houses were built over a one year period. Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 249, and 246 were finished January 23, 1934. Facility Nos. 256, 260, 266, and 278 were completed November 28, 1934 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
- 2. Architect: Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
- 3. Original Owner: Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The permanent housing area was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and remains in Navy ownership in 1995.
- 4. Builder, Contractor, Supplier: Construction of the COQ Type C housing was let in two contracts. McKee Company built Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, and 246 at a cost of \$9,172.42 each. Meyer Construction Company built Facility Nos. 256, 260, 266, and 278 at a cost of \$12,285.07 each.
- 5. Original Plans and Construction: Original plans for all permanent housing were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals heve not been located, but copies of these plans for all permanent housing (elevations, electrical, plumbing, floor plans) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division, in San Bruno, California, and can be accessed through the U. S. Navy. Original ink plans prepared for driveway and sidewalk paving and depicting site plans of the housing areas are filed at the National Archives. Facility cards for the permanent housing, including an original

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 3

photograph taken at completion of construction and floor plans, are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, in Novato, CA. Early views of the permanent housing area under construction and at completion of work are contained in the Walt Lyons scrapbook at the Marin County Library, History Room, San Rafael, CA.

6. Alterations/Additions: Most of the original steel sash or casement windows have been replaced with aluminum multi-light windows. Kitchens were remodeled in 1955 and original cabinets, appliances, hardware, flooring, and lighting were replaced. In 1962 the tile countertops and backsplashes in the kitchen were removed and replaced with post-formed plastic laminate. Kitchen floor coverings were replaced with vinyl asbestos tiles. A recessed light fixture was added over the sink at this time. Some interior fixtures in the remainder of the house have been removed and replaced with modern fixtures. Porches were enclosed in some units in 1934 and others were enclosed in 1956.

#### **B.** Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

# PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

#### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The permanent housing area at Hamilton Field was planned around the existing topography to complement the architectural style chosen for the base. Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churriguerresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

All permanent housing is of hollow tile and stucco construction and has Mission tile roofs and reinforced concrete foundations. Steel bars were used during construction in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Houses are all equipped with laundry and storage basements, attached garages, built-in closets and cabinets, end tiled bathrooms.

### **HAMILTON FIELD**

Company Officers' Quarters, Type C (Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, 246, 256, 260, 266, 278)

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 4

2. Condition of fabric: All of the permanent housing is in excellent condition. The U. S. Navy has maintained the exteriors and interiors of the structures since they took over ownership in the mid 1970s. Navy crews have regularly made repairs, painted as necessary, and conducted routine maintenance.

# B. Description of Exterior:

- 1. Overall dimensions: The Company Officers' Quarters Type C dwellings were constructed in an irregular "U" shaped plan, with a one-story mass. The front elevations feature recessed porches, cantilevered wrought iron balconies, decorative grilles, arched windowheads, and a prominent front stairway. They measure 59 feet 10 inches wide by 58 feet 2 inches deep. All have partially below grade basements.
- 2. Foundation: Foundations are reinforced concrete and measures two feet wide at the base and one foot wide above the basement floor.
- 3. Walls: Exterior walls are 12-inch hollow tile bricks. The tile bricks are coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing consists of recessed windowheads with a low-pitched arch, projecting cast concrete window sills, cast concrete grilles, and terra cotta four-inch round tile vents in the gable ends.
- 4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by reinforced walls with wood-framed load-bearing interior walls. Reinforced concrete tile beams extend around the building at each floor level. Roof systems consist of terra cotta Mission tile laid on wood rafters.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance to each dwelling is accessed via a concrete porch covered with a Mission tile shed-roof supported by wood Mission-style brackets and chamfered 6-inch posts. Stairs are concrete with 12-inch square red quarry tile treads; balustrades are solid cast concrete and have decorative terra cotta planter pots on the top railing. Cantilevered wrought iron balconies are located on the exterior wall of the master bedroom of each building; they have wrought iron railings and arched cast concrete flooring. Concrete porches with exterior stairways provide access to the kitchen hallways on side elevations. They have Mission tile shed roofs supported by wood brackets and decorative chamfered posts and have an enclosed concrete railing. The rear of the house is accessed through a walled terrace with a Y-shaped flagstone terrace walkway.
- 6. Chimneys: A rectangular stucco-clad brick chimney is located on the interior living room wall of each building, at the point where the gables cross.

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 5

# 7. Openings:

- a. Doorways/doors: Primary entrance doors are accessed from the front porches; secondary doors are at the side elevations and on the rear center walls. The primary door is solid core oak with five vertical panels and batten and a central leaded glass window which opens. It has wrought iron strap hinges and rows of iron studs. Secondary exterior doors are solid core wood with four lights originally made with wire plate glass over three recessed panels. Double wood French doors provide egress from the living room to the rear terrace. One pair is loceted on the front balcony. Original garage doors had eight recessed panels (the top two were glass; the bottom two were wrought iron grilles). Garage doors are the overhead segmented type with two lights above four sets of recessed panels and replaced hinged swing doors.
- b. Windows/shutters: Original windows were screened multi-paned metal casement or double hung sash; replacement windows are metal and glass, with multi-lights.

#### 8. Roof:

- a. Shape/covering: The houses have low-pitched cross gable roofs; the central mass has an end gable roof which connects the front-gable roofs on each wing. They are clad in terra cotta Mission tiles. A cast concrete splash block is located under each downspout. The roofs have Mission tile ridges.
- b. Cornice/eaves: Eaves on the gable end walls consist of a single row of Mission tiles with metal gutters, downspouts, and scuppers.

# C. Description of Interior:

#### 1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: Basements are accessed by exterior garage doors and interior stairways from the kitchen hallways. Each floor plan is divided into a garage, laundry room, and storage room. An unexcavated crawl space is present under the front porch.
- b. First Floor: The primary access to the homes is through an entry from the front porch to the living room, which is flanked by e dining room, kitchen, butler's pantry, and maid's room and bath on one side and three bedrooms and two baths on the other.
- 2. Stairways: The COQ Type C housing units are served by an interior stairwey from the kitchen aree to the basement. They have wood risers and treads, two- by four-inch wood railings, and chamfered posts.

(Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, 246, 256, 260, 266, 278)

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 6

- 3. Flooring: Flooring in the hallways, living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms is red oak. Flooring in the kitchens is Douglas fir covered with vinyl or asphalt tile added after 1961. The kitchen and pantry floor originally were covered with linoleum. The basement and garage have concrete floors, smooth finished. Flooring in the bathrooms is one- by one-inch, one- by two-inch, or one-inch hexagonal ceramic tile in a variety of color schemes (e.g., white/black, lavender/purple, cream/black). Bathrooms have marble thresholds. A bronze threshold is present in the living room French doors.
- 4. Wall/ceiling finish: All rooms on the first and second floors have painted plaster walls and ceilings. Basement walls are painted concrete or tile. Bathroom walls are partially covered with four-inch ceramic tile, with baseboards and trim in a contrasting color.

# 5. Openings:

- a. Doorways/doors: Archways provide access from the living rooms to the entry halls and dining rooms. A recessed niche in the master bedroom is also access through an archway. All other doors are solid core wood with two or three recessed plywood panels.
- 6. Decorative features/trim: The gabled living room ceiling is wood with decorative notched *vigas*, rafters, and trusses. Door casings and baseboards are wood and simple in design. Picture molding is located at the cornice level of the living rooms, dining rooms, hallways, and bedrooms. Each home has a living room fireplace constructed of plaster with a three-sided chimney breast overhanging the traver hearth pilasters, and a recessed ceramic tile niche in its center. Hearths are three-piece traver tile.
- 7. Hardware: The exterior door has a thumblatch lock, hammered strap hinges, and is set with metal spikes. The interior door hardware consists of a nickel-plated decorative circular knob and escutcheon made by the Corbin Company. The front door and French doors have hammered nickel-plated brass thumblatch handles. The built-in cabinets in all rooms but the kitchen and pantry have porcelain or glass knobs. The original electric plates are plastic and extant in many of the units. Metal "Dixie" brand bells connected to the electric front doorbells are located in the kitchens.

#### B. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Steam radiators are located in each room and provide heating. They were made by American Radiator or Crane Radiator Companies. Steam is generated by cast iron boilers located in the basement made by Ideal Gas Boiler Company or Bryant Tubular Gas Boiler Company, Cleveland, Ohio. Some boilers have valves made in Germany in the early 1930s that are stamped with a swastika.

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 7

- b. Kitchen Appliances: No original kitchen appliances were noted. Current appliances include "Magic Chef" gas stoves and refrigerators.
- c. Ventilation: Ventilation for the attics is through terra cotta four-inch round vents or three Mission tile vents in the gable ends. Basements are vented through screened grilles.
- d. Lighting: Houses are wired with knob and tube wiring and circuit breaker boxes. The original lighting on the front porch consists of a cast metal sconce with frosted glass; in the first floor hallways consists of a hanging wrought iron circular fixture with a canopy and chain. Dining room lighting included a wrought iron "Monterey" style fixture with five arms with candle lights, and four triangular shaped wrought iron wall sconces with candle lights. Hallway lighting consisted of a cast-metal canopy with six points. Bedroom fixtures consist of well sconces with candle lights on arms and surface mounted canopies with pointed pan glass; meny of these are missing, their locations marked by metal plates. Fixtures in the maids' rooms were decorative cast metal with double sockets end candle lights. Original bathroom lights were ceramic wall sconces, flanking the medicine cabinets, and operated by pull chains. Not all lighting fixtures are extant in every unit. Track lights have been added to the *vig*as in the living room and fluorescent tubes now illuminate the garages.
- e. Plumbing: An "Alberene Stone" double wash sink is located in each basement. Primary bathrooms feature "Tepeco" or "Standard" pedestal sinks, "Standard Madera" or "Crane" flush valve toilets, tubs with wall-mounted porcelain and metal "Crane" fixtures, and the original ceramic toothbrush and glass holders, soap dishes, toilet paper holders, and plastic-covered wood towel racks. The original mirrored metal medicine cabinets are located above the sinks. Some units have replacement sinks or faucets, but appear to be in original condition otherwise. Soap dishes, toothbrush holders, toilet paper holders, and towel bars in the maid's bathroom are chrome plated. This room contains a "Welling," "Standard," or "Crane" flush valve toilet, wall-mounted "Standard" sink, and enameled cast iron tub. A small door in the maid's bedroom accesses the bathroom plumbing.
- 9. Original Furnishings: Original furnishings are built-in and include wood bookcases on one side of the living room fireplaces. Telephone niches with wood panel doors are located in the hallways. Other built-ins include linen closets by the bathrooms, dressing room cabinets and drawers, and china cabinets in the dining rooms. All heve white glass or porcelain knobs and recessed wood panel doors. The pantries feature original solid-core wooden cabinets and doors with recessed panels. Built-in pull-down "Berklee" ironing boards, with two recessed wood panel doors, are located in the kitchens. Kitchen cabinets are wood, with Mission-style hammered metal hinges and latches end

# HAMILTON FIELD Company Officers' Quarters, Type C

(Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, 246, 256, 260, 266, 278)

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 8

were added in 1955, replacing original recessed panel cabinets. Original kitchen cabinets had tile counters and backsplash; these have been replaced with formica counters.

#### D. Site:

- 1. General site orientation: The primary facades of the Company Officers' Quarters Type C face westerly toward Oakwood and Las Lomas Drive, except for No. 278 which faces easterly. Located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on the slopes of rolling hills, they are surrounded by other officers' querters of like design.
- 2. Historic landscape design: Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect thet was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

In the housing areas the homes sit in well-landscaped grounds with lawns, mature oak and palm trees, shrubs, and flowers. Upright accent trees frame the doors and corners of many buildings. There are no fences; each yard flows into the next end the plantings, stone retaining walls, street light standards, and curved roads lined with palms and other trees provide a cohesive feel to the area. Concrete sidewalks provide separation from the curving streets and connect the houses. The diversity, density, and uniqueness of landscape plantings increased according to military rank of individuals living in the houses; thus landscaping in the NCO area is primarily functional, while that of the base commander is dense and heavily wooded, providing more privacy.

Landscaping in the Company Officers' permanent housing area include barrier, foundation, accent, and street plantings. Barrier plantings create an illusory separation between houses in lieu of fences. Nurse used blackwood acacia, Modesto ash, Canary Island pine, and Lombardy popular for barrier plantings here, as in the NCO area. The Company Officers' private space was also delimited with California bigtree, silver poplar, coast redwood, white ironbark, black locust, Monterey pine, California fan palm, and Mexican fan palm. Compared to the NCO area the density and diversity of the plantings increased noticeably as one moved uphill.

Foundation plantings were originally designed to hide foundations and tend to soften the transition between the ground and the buildings. These are fundamental design plants and a wide variety were used for this purpose, including Japanese

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 9

boxwoods, California privet, myrtle, little-leafed myrtle, mock orange, laurel cherry, red clusterberry, and shiny-leaf privet. Exclusive to the Company Officers' housing area were Chinese photinia, strawberry tree, and citrus cultivars. During the primary occupation at Hamilton foundation shrubs were kept pruned and boxed-sheped, reflecting the preferred look of the day. Most of these plantings have become quite large and overgrown and appear as accent plants.

Accent plants serve to set off entranceways, driveway corners, highlight a building front, or provide individuality. Nurse planned these plants as upright accents to contrast with the foundation plantings. In the front and back of the residences New Zealand dracaena, Italian cypress, and Oriental arborvitae are prominent. The most striking difference between this housing area and the NCO area is the incorporation of accent plantings between houses. Several species were incorporated in this manner and not used elsewhere on base, although their use is generally limited to a single tree between houses. While the list of plants used for this purpose is long, representative species, include magnolia, avocado, cherry, weeping cypress, California peppertree, deodar cedar, and Norway spruce. The open space in the center of traffic circles in this area (North and South Circle) were planted with large and striking conifers, most prominently atlas cedar, deodar cedar, cost redwood, cypress, incense cedar, and California bigtree. Many of these were transported to base as mature trees, as per Nurses' orders.

In addition to the plantings around the Company Officers' housing, the outer margin of Perimeter Road (which rings the residential area) is bordered with a planting of northern California black walnut and Canary Island date palm. Occasional Canary Island pine and other upright conifers were added to the rears of the houses along the outer margins of the base.

#### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HA8S No. CA-2398).

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HA8S No. CA-2398).

#### **HAMILTON FIELD**

Company Officers' Quarters, Type C (Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, 246, 256, 260, 266, 278)

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 10

# D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

#### Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S. U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

#### Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

#### Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

#### Thomason and Associates

1993 Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

### E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

### F. Supplemental Material:

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility Nos. 226, 232, 236, 240, 246, 256, 260, 266, 278, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

HABS No. CA-2398-BJ Page 11

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 ČFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

